

“Make Room for Rubrics”



Creating and Using Rubrics

Created originally by

Leda M. Cott, Ph.D.

Edited by Ginger Y. McKinney

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Have you ever heard that a little
hard work up front saves time in
the end?

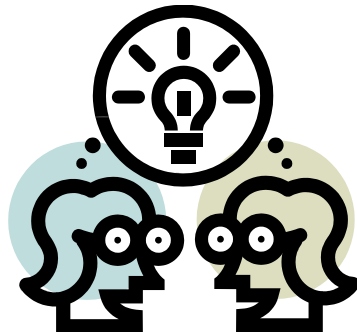


Can you think of an example
when this was the case?



This is definitely true in the case of rubrics!

- Learning to create rubrics is like learning anything valuable. It takes an initial time investment. Once the task becomes second nature, it actually saves time while creating a higher quality student product.



What A Rubric Is:

- Rubrics are not a *form of assessment*, but are *the criteria* for making an assessment.
- A rubric is a scoring tool
- It lists the criteria for a piece of work



- Rubrics articulate gradations of quality for each criterion from excellent to poor.
- Rubrics support the mandate for authentic (“real world”) assessment stated in national standards across the curriculum.
- Rubrics set forth precise criteria. Teachers are better able to assess skills that may fall outside the scope of traditional testing.
- Rubrics provide consistent scores attached to each level, such as 1 through 5, that provide an objective basis for assigning grades.



Specifically, rubrics are:

- Matrixes
- They define what is expected in a learning situation.
- Rubrics can teach students to focus on current and future performance (“What steps can I take to progress to the next level?”)

- A rubric is a working guide for students and teachers, usually handed out before the assignment begins in order to get students to think about the criteria on which their work will be judged.
- A rubric enhances the quality of direct instruction, by providing focus, emphasis, and attention to particular details as a model for students.
- Many experts believe that rubrics improve students' end products and therefore increase learning.
- Rubrics will provide the scaffolding necessary to improve the quality of their work and increase their knowledge.

When a Rubric is Well-Defined:

- Learners know exactly what is expected of them and how they can achieve a top grade.
- Most learners want to excel and will work hard if they believe there is an opportunity for success.
- They will exert more effort and produce more work to meet clearly expressed expectations for success.

Rubrics are basically
a simplified way
to grade
a complicated
assignment.

Rubrics are scoring criteria that are:

- Summative: provide information about a student's knowledge
- Formative: provide information about a student's strengths and weaknesses; it becomes an ongoing part of the whole teaching and learning process.
- Evaluative: provide ways to create instruction that better fits each student's needs
- Educative: Provide students with an understanding of how they learn

Why Use Rubrics?

- Rubrics appeal to teachers and students for many reasons.
- They are powerful tools for both teaching and assessment.
- Rubrics can improve student performance.
- Rubrics can monitor student performance.
- Rubrics can make teachers' expectations clear.
- Rubrics can show students how to meet teacher expectations.

More Advantages of using Rubrics in Assessment:

- They allow assessment to be more objective and consistent.
- They focus the teacher to clarify the criteria in specific terms.
- They clearly show the student how their work will be evaluated and what is expected.
- Provide useful feedback regarding the effectiveness of the instruction.
- Provide benchmarks against which to measure and document progress.

Common Features:

- Rubrics can be created in a variety of forms and levels of complexity, however, they all contain common features.
- These features focus on measuring a stated objective (performance, behavior, or quality)
- They use a range to rate performance.
- They contain specific characteristics arranged in levels indicating the degree to which a standard has been met.

The Result of Using Rubrics:

- The result is often marked improvement in the quality of student work and in learning.
- The most common argument for using rubrics is they help define “quality.”

A Second Reason that Rubrics are Useful:

- They help students become more thoughtful judges of the quality of their own work.
- Students become increasingly able to spot and solve problems in their own work.
- Repeated use of rubrics increases students' sense of responsibility for their own work.

A Third Reason:

- Rubrics reduce the amount of time teachers spend evaluating student work.
- Teachers tend to find that by the time a piece has been student-assessed according to a rubric, they have little left to say about it.
- Teachers can then often simply check an item in the rubric, rather than struggling to explain the flaw or strength they have noticed, and trying to figure out what to suggest in terms of improvements.
- Rubrics provide students with more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement.

Fourth:

- Teachers appreciate rubrics because their “accordion” nature allows them to accommodate heterogeneous classes. The examples given have three or four gradations of quality, but there is no reason they can not be “stretched” to reflect the work of both gifted and those with learning challenges.

And Finally:

- Rubrics are easy to use and to explain.
- Students are more able to articulate what they have learned.
- Students know exactly what they need to do to be successful.

To summarize; in the classroom,
rubrics can:

- Make assessment more meaningful
- Clarify expectations
- Yield better feedback

For the students, a rubric:

- Clarifies the often “mysterious” grade at the end of a unit, project, paper, presentation, or other assignment
- Can give insight and direction about what is important about the assignment/activity

There are two predominant types of rubrics:

- Holistic - assess student work as a whole.
- Analytical - identify and assess components of a finished project.

Neither type of rubric is better than the other. Both have a place in authentic assessment.

- Creating a rubric is a fairly easy process even though it takes a little time.
- However, the time is well worth the effort.

Constructing a Rubric:

- Know the goals for instruction
- Know the specific skills that you want students to develop throughout the activity/assignment.
- What are the learning outcomes?
- Decide on the structure of the rubric; holistic or analytical -- what fits best for the task?
- Determine the levels of performance
- Are there levels of performance specific to each criteria?
- Share the rubric with your students
- Students should have an opportunity to see, discuss, or even design the rubric prior to the performance, project, activity, assignment, etc.

Here's How, Step-by-Step:

- 1. Make a list of what you want the students to accomplish through the assignment.**
- 2. Organize a list from most important to least important (ranked list).**
- 3. Decide on an overall point value for the assignment.**
- 4. Assign each item on the ranked list a percentage value out of 100 percent.**
- 5. Multiply the total point value from step 3 by each item's assigned percentage to arrive at the point value for that item.**
- 6. On a fresh sheet of paper, write the name for each item on your list in order from most to least important (or visa versa). Make sure to leave room in between each category.**
- 7. Assign specific grading criteria for each main category from step six. Be sure to actually list the ways in which students might meet the criterion. Avoid unclear language. Avoid unnecessarily negative language. Articulate gradations of quality.**
- 8. Distribute or display the rubric to the students when you are explaining the assignment.**
- 9. Attach a copy of the rubric filled in with the student's scores to his/her graded work once it is completed.**

What To Do Once You Created Rubrics

- Creating rubrics is the difficult part
- Using them is relatively easy!
- When you hand the marked rubric back with the students' work, they'll know what they did well and what they need to work on in the future.
- However you use them, the idea is to support and to evaluate student learning.

Tips:

- Definitely knowing what the categories will be before making the assignment.
- The upfront time in creating the rubric more than pays off in the reduced time it takes to grade the assignment.
- Each rubric item should focus on a different skill.
- Focus on how students develop and express their learning.
- Evaluate only measurable criteria.
- Ideally, the entire rubric should fit on one sheet of paper.

In Conclusion

- Rubrics serve, above all, to inform and improve teachers' instruction, while giving students the feedback they need to learn and grow.

There is, however, one drawback to the use of rubrics:

The students will want to have rubrics for

everything

they learn!



- **Rubrics are an effective assessment tool in evaluating student performance in areas which are complex and vague.**
- *Students take more responsibility for their own learning.*
- **Students have a clearer idea of what is expected in terms of specific performance.**
- *Stakeholders are given clear information about student assessment and instructional objectives.*
- **Teachers clarify their goals, expectations, and focus.**
- *Teachers find that their paperwork is reduced.*
- **When teachers begin designing assessments as part of their lesson planning, the process forces them to think carefully about what they are going to teach and what they expect students to learn.**
- *Prepare rubrics as guides students can use to build on current knowledge.*
- **Consider rubrics as part of your planning time, not as an additional time commitment to your preparation.**